foreigners who enter India on short term visa but want to extend their stay for a year or more, must undergo testing for HIV and AIDS once during their stay. However, foreigners working in various missions whether enjoying diplomatic status or not; foreign priests and nuns and foreign journalists accredited to the PIB (Press Information Bureau of India) are excluded from the testing fof HIV and AIDS.

(b) to (d) In order to examine the issue, a meeting of experts was held on 15-6-99 which was attended to by the representatives fromW.H.O., Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICC.R), National Institute of Communicable Diseases (N.I.CD), Ministry of Home Affairs,-A.I.I.M.S. New Delhi, Lady Harding Medical College (LHMC), New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs, U.N. AIDS, National AIDS Research Institute, Pune and National Law School of India, Bangalore.The Ministry of Tourism did not participate in the meeting.The experts were of the opinion that mandatory HIV testing on foreigners/ foreign students is contrary to the recommendations of the World Health Organisation.

The issue was again discussed in the 15th meeting of the National AIDS Control Board held on 3rd August, 1999 under the Chairmanship of Health Secretary and the Board agreed with the opinion of the experts and gave its concurrence for revising the policy on HIV testing for foreigners including foreign students. The revised policy has since been approved by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Reduction of seats in Medical Colleges

1961. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have reduced the.number of seats in Medical Colleges in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the total number of seats in medical colleges and dental colleges in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) and (b) As per provisions of Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Act,1993 and the Dentists (Amendment) Act, 1993 and the Regulations framed thereunder, the Central Government permission is granted for starting of a Medical/ Dental College for one year.This permission is renewed on yearly basis after verification of the achievements of annual targets in respect of creation of infrastructure facilities. In case of failure of the college authorities to meet the annual target of development of infrastructure, the annual renewal of permission is not granted.The college accordingly cannot admit students unless they rectify the deficiencies to the satisfaction of the Professional Councils and the Government of India. Accordingly, permission for admission of students during 2002-2003 has not so far been renewed in respect of 27 medical and 36 dental colleges. Further, this process of renewal of permission is a continuous one and the Government renews the permission as and when the recommendations of the Professional Councils are received.

(c) As on date 192 medical and 151 dental colleges are functioning in the country. The annual intake capacity of these colleges is approximately 21, 350 and 9,580 respectively.

Universal Immunization Programme for Hepatitis-B

1962. SHRI P. K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently introduced a Universal Immunization Programme for Hepatitis-B Vaccine for liver ailments;